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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a workshop designed for individuals involved in inservice education and staff development for school personnel. The purpose of the workshop was to help participants learn and integrate some simple and functional skills that would enable them to face issues and empower themselves. The focus is on developing skills to become a change master for oneself and skills to assist other individuals and organizations with self-empowerment. The workshop included participant activities designed to elicit identification of key issues facing educators. Issues identified include: need for higher quality staff development; need for people who will take on leadership roles; lack of professionalism; frustrated teachers, parents, and children; need for strategic planning; burnout; and need for cooperative decision making. The paper suggests that coping adequately with these issues and helping others to cope begins with knowledge of one's own feelings and experiences and developing a sense of self-worth. The paper includes a worksheet, "Accepting the Challenge of Facing Your Issues and Empowering Yourself." (IAH)

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16TH ANNUAL NCSIE NATIONAL CONFERENCE
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Accepting The Challenge
Of Facing Your Issues And Empowering Yourself

presented by

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Today you have an opportunity to learn and integrate some simple and functional skills to face issues and empower yourself. You will also experience being a change master of your self in order to assist other individuals and organizations with self-empowerment.

I am going to begin as is customary in Hawaii, where I live. And that is, to greet you with a warm Aloha. The word Aloha is filled with deep meaning. The "ha" is the breath of life. So I am saying, I greet you with my breath or my spirit.

Another custom in the Islands is to present a person with a flower lei on special occasions. In place of a full flower lei, I have brought each of you an orchid. Like each of us, the flower also has an essence or spirit about it. The flower is in its power simply by being a flower. The word "mana" is Hawaiian for the power or essence of something. Everything has power. We are here today to speak of and experience empowerment.

Let us take a moment to quietly get in touch with our own mana or power. Close your eyes, take a few deep breaths and acknowledge the life giving power of the "ha", your breath. And now, within this silence, set your intent for what you want to give and what you want to receive in our time together today.

It is my intent to provide an environment where you can learn and integrate skills to empower yourself and be a change master for assisting others with their empowerment.

Turn to someone you have not met and introduce yourself. Name the different groups of people you work with and state one or two key challenges or issues you are faced with right now.

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From what has been discussed, let us look at the key issues that appear to be facing people in education today.

- * Need for higher quality of staff development
- * Not enough people who take on leadership roles
- * Lack of professionalism
- * Frustrated teachers, parents and children
- * Need for strategic planning
- * Burnout
- * Need for cooperative decision making

Close your eyes and put yourself right into each of these issues. In fact, add some more of your own so that you really experience what it feels like to be surrounded by challenges. Picture the issues swirling around and reach out to try to grab ahold of a couple of them. How does that feel? Are you able to get ahold of an issue and bring balance to the disharmony?

The whirlwind of issues in our lives can sometimes feel like an internal tornado. When we are attempting to overpower an issue and get it under control, it's like trying to lasso a hurricane. Not an easy task.

There is often a tendency to jump out into the spinning and attempt to pull people to the center. What happens is that we simply get sucked out into the whirlwind and caught up in the drama. People get to the center by being there. The only door to the center lies within yourself. Once people are listened to and experience what it is like to be in the center, they can take the trip to that peaceful place on their own.

A tornado has a still place. There is calmness right in the middle of the turmoil. We can learn from nature and know that when we are swept up by a whirlwind of issues, we simple need to get to the center. Before we can get to the center of the issue, we need to get to the center of ourselves.

We must first enter into the experience of our own life so we can speak from a balance of wisdom, power and love. It is this solid base that will support all structures. With this foundation and point of reference, we can go into schools, homes, businesses and organizations and provide them an experience of empowerment by our presence. Then, when we speak of empowerment and professionalism we speak from our own knowing, from the reality of our experiences.

Remember the flower. It is from this position of simply being, that true power is in motion. When we are like the flower, we are in our power. Being in our power means that we are centered in love and able to express our wisdom and understanding from this place.

You will now have an opportunity to make a conscious commitment to empower yourself. Take a moment to quiet your mind and find that peaceful place within yourself before you begin filling out the handout.

**ACCEPTING THE CHALLENGE
OF FACING YOUR ISSUES AND EMPOWERING YOURSELF**

1. I _____ consciously accept the challenge
of facing my issues and empowering myself.

2. The issues I am dealing with in my life right now are

3. The most challenging issue for me is _____

4. The issue I choose to face today is _____

5. The reason this is an issue for me is _____

6. Some of the possible solutions are _____

7. My next step to bring resolve to this issue is _____

8. Some of the ways I can empower myself are _____

Discuss with one other person some of the ways you can empower yourself. As we gather back together in our large group let's summarize some of the techniques you have discovered.

Once we empower ourselves, it is a natural flow to create an environment in which we provide others the opportunity to empower themselves. Administration, staff, teachers, co-workers, parents, children, friends, family, the environment and all living things benefit from our loving power. When we sincerely acknowledge our own value, it is easy to recognize the precious importance of all others.

We are called upon to be Change Masters. I see a Change Master as one who can stay centered and provide a reference point for others as change is happening. A skilled gardener flows with the changing seasons and adjusts the type of tasks to be done depending on how the flowers are doing.

We need to be as wise as the gardener and observe how the flowering people we are working with are doing. Is the soil nourishing? Are we providing a nourished growing environment for the people we work with? Is there a balance of rain and sunshine? Do people have an opportunity to express the sorrows and the joys of their daily experiences. Is there enough shade? Do people feel they have a safe place to be, simple be? Are there a variety of flowers in the garden? Honoring the uniqueness of each person creates an enjoyable and productive work environment.

The flower continues being a flower whether there is a gardener or not. When there is a gardener who cooperates and communicates with the flowers, there is the potential of having flowers that are more healthy and beautiful because they have been loved and supported in being what they are, a flower.

People are like the flowers, they will bloom whether we are around or not. We can serve as skilled gardeners or change masters by being centered, flowing with the changes and providing an environment where people are encouraged and supported in blossoming into their own power.

And like the flower, it is the unique beauty and presence of each one that creates the garden. As the song, One Out Of Many plays, let us join together in a circle and experience the blossoming of our beauty, wisdom, power and love.

In closing, I bid you a fond Aloha as you continue to blossom in your mana/power. REMEMBER--POWER IS A FLOWER.